

LETTER

FROM THE

HON. JAMES B. CLAY.

The following letter from the Hon. JAMES B. CLAY, son of the immortal HENRY CLAY, written to a gentleman living in the vicinity of this place, has been kindly furnished us for publication. It will forever put to rest, in the minds of candid men, the charge of "bargain and corruption" now urged against Mr. Buchanan. It commends itself to every National man and Old Line Whig in the country:

ASHLAND, near Lexington, July 14, 1856.

Dear Sir:—I have received your letter of the 7th inst. I am gratified to learn that you are still an Old Line Whig, who has not given in to the modern heresies which have come so near sweeping our noble old party from the face of the earth. We are too few in numbers to present separate candidates to the people, for their suffrages for the highest office in their gift, but we are not too few to adhere faithfully to the principles of our fathers, and believing them to be true, and that truth must eventually prevail, to hope for better times, when the country may have recovered from the madness which appears to have seized upon it.

Like myself and thousands of our fellow-citizens, you are casting about to endeavor to ascertain what may be the course your duty to your country ought to impel you to pursue in the contest which is approaching between the candidates of parties, to none of which you yourself belong. You do me the honor to ask my advice and my opinion. I give my opinion cheerfully and freely.

I regard the stability of the Union as in greater peril than it ever has been since the foundation of the government. In 1820 the wisest and best men thought it in danger from the slavery question. The so-called Missouri Compromise was passed for the purpose and with the hope that

it would put that question finally at rest. In 1850 it was plainly seen that the hope was futile and the purpose without avail. The whole country was distracted and torn in pieces, and the boldest and wisest statesmen trembled for the Union. By the efforts of the best men of all parties the Compromise of 1850 was effected, and men once again breathed freely in the feeling that the country was safe. How vain, how futile their hopes! Scarcely are some of the noblest actors in the scenes of 1850 cold in their graves when again the question of Slavery—in other words of Union and Dissolution—is presented to us, and in a form more tangible and direct than it ever before was. The Anti-Slavery party of the North determined to accomplish its purposes, has presented a purely sectional candidate, North against South, in the person of Col. Fremont for the Presidency. It is my opinion that there is now no other issue than this—North against South—Union or Dissolution of the Union;—upon this issue what are we to do as lovers of our country, who know no North, no South, no East nor West.

The Whig party, to which alone of present parties I can belong, has not thought it prudent and advisable to present candidates to the country. We have offered for our suffrages, opposing Mr. Fremont, two candidates, Mr. Fillmore and Mr. Buchanan, both of whom I believe to be, upon the Slavery question, as true to the Union as I am myself. Each of them is the representative of principles to which I am myself opposed. So far as regards my own convictions and my own principles, neither Mr. Fillmore or Mr. Buchanan is my choice; but I must choose between them, or suffer, so far as I am concerned, the Black Republican party to destroy the glorious Union under which I was born and live. It is but a choice of evils, but both far less evils than would be the election of Fremont. In making the choice, I shall be governed not by personal attachment or personal repugnance to one or the other. I shall vote for that one who I believe will be most likely to defeat Fremont and save the Union. *It is my earnest belief that Mr. BUCHANAN, has a better chance of success than Mr. Fillmore, and it is my opinion that it is the duty of every man, and of every Old Line Whig, who pretends to love his country to VOTE FOR HIM as the surest means of saving the Union.*

It has been repeatedly urged to men that Mr. Buchanan was the political enemy and the vilifier of my father. Were everything that has been said true, I should reply, *I loved my father better than I loved any mortal man, but I love my Country more.* But I do not believe the charge against Mr. Buchanan to be true. I know that for more than twenty-five years, politically, he was the opponent of my father. I

do not, for an instant, believe that he had any complicity with Gen. Jackson and others in the charge of bargain and corruption made against my father in 1825. If I believe this, I must at the same time believe my own father to have been false; for publicly and privately he exonerated Mr. Buchanan from the charge; witness his private letter, *never intended for publication*, to his old friend, Judge Brook, page 169 of Colton's Private Correspondence of Henry Clay, in which he says "he could not desire a stronger statement from Mr. Buchanan;" and his public speech at Washington, on his retirement from the office of Secretary of State, in which he uses the following language:—

"That citizen (General Jackson) has done me great injustice. It was inflicted, as I must ever believe, for the double purpose of gratifying private resentment, and promoting personal ambition. When, during the late canvass, he came forward in the public prints under his proper name, with his charge against me, and summoned before the public tribunal, his friend and only witness (Mr. Buchanan) to establish it, the anxious attention of the whole American people was directed to the testimony which that witness might render. He promptly obeyed the call, and testified to what he knew. He *could* say nothing, and he *said nothing* which cast the slightest shade upon my honor or integrity. What he *did* say was the reverse of any implication of me."

These are enough for me; other men may pretend that they are greater friends of my father than I am myself; they have done so, and they will for miserable party purposes do so again. Suffice it, that he was my father, my partner, and my best friend in life. I never forgave, and never will forgive, real injuries and real treachery to him; and it is my firm belief that if I were to attempt a crusade against all those who were guilty of wrong and of injury to him, I should find my hands most abundantly occupied with those whose mouths are now most full of his name. I make no war upon them, and if I could only see them willing to abandon their wretched hunt after office, at the expense of all principle, and to strike one blow for that Union my father so loved that he gave his life for it, much of my rancor towards them would be appeased.

I have thus, my dear sir, with perfect freedom and candor, given you my views and opinions. You are free to use them as you please, publicly or privately.

I am, very respectfully, &c.,

Your obedient servant,

JAMES B. CLAY.

